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Chairman: Ms. Cronenberg-Mossberg ..... (Sweden)
later: Mr. Chowdhury ..... (Bangladesh)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 103: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (A/58/75-E/2003/21)

1. **Ms. Sulafa Al-Bassam** (Chief, Regional Commissions Liaison Office) introduced the Secretary-General's note submitting the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on the Economic and Social Repercussions of the Israeli Occupation on the Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab Population in the Occupied Syrian Golan (A/58/75-E/2003/21), and said that the occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel continued to aggravate the living conditions of the Palestinian people.

2. The Israeli army had persistently used excessive force, resorting to arbitrary detention, extra-judicial killings, demolition of houses and destruction of infrastructure and crops. Israel was pursuing its plan to build physical barriers running through the West Bank with the stated aim of separating the Israeli and Palestinian populations. The first phase of that plan had been completed in July 2003 and involved the construction of walls, fences, buffer zones, trenches and security watchtowers in the most fertile and intensively cultivated agricultural areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, after confiscating land and uprooting over 100,000 trees, thereby exerting a severely damaging socio-economic impact on 210,000 Palestinians residing in 67 towns and villages. There was general agreement among the Member States of the United Nations that the barrier contravened international law. Underscoring that international consensus, the General Assembly had overwhelmingly passed in October 2003 a resolution demanding that Israel should halt the construction of the separation wall.

3. The note indicated that the acts of forced eviction, seizure, demolition and closure of Palestinian structures throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory had escalated in 2002–2003. Those Israeli policies continued to devastate the Palestinian economy, and as a result unemployment had tripled and poverty had spread to more than two-thirds of the population. Closures and the consequent loss of employment opportunities had reduced the Palestinian gross national product per capita by 24 per cent in 2002. In March 2003, 60 per cent of the population in the West Bank and Gaza lived below the poverty line.

4. The Israeli settlements throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory were one of the fundamental sources of friction and fuelled the conflict between the two peoples. Their geographical distribution severely restricted the growth of Palestinian communities, exacerbated overcrowding and further cut Palestinian communities off from each other. All that constituted an obstacle to the economic and social development of the Palestinian people.

5. Some 150 Palestinian communities had no independent water supply and were cut off entirely from any water source through a combination of army closures and restrictions on movement. The note examined how Israeli checkpoints, closures and curfews severely impeded access to medical care, education and employment.

6. Lastly, the speaker recalled that the Secretary-General's Personal Humanitarian Envoy had observed in August 2002 that the crisis would continue to worsen unless political decisions were taken to lift closures, curfews and other restrictions on the civilian population, and that lasting and productive security could not be achieved by violence or the construction of walls and barricades but depended on trust and respect between people.

7. **Mr. El-Farnawany** (Egypt) said that genuine and enduring peace could not be attained if Israel maintained its current practices. That country had not realized that the only way to resolve the Middle East conflict was to establish peace and an independent Palestinian State based on the 1967 boundaries. The various aspects of the Palestinian cause were interrelated. The ESCWA report gave a pessimistic comprehensive picture of the reality experienced by the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan. Under those circumstances, the Palestine economy had recorded enormous losses and rising rates of unemployment and poverty, compounded by the deterioration of education and medical care.

8. Ignoring international condemnation and violating the territorial integrity of Palestine, Israel had enlarged the settlements and exploited the natural resources of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Moreover, it had begun to build a wall within Palestinian territory, with devastating consequences for the life of tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians.

9. At a time when efforts were being made to strengthen economic cooperation, the role of the United Nations and the implementation of its resolutions in all areas and good governance at all levels, the international community could not overlook one State's policies of occupation and settlement of another people's territory in violation of that people's fundamental economic, political and social rights and the principles of international law. Avoiding neutral positions and double standards, the international community should oppose resolutely Israeli practices against the Palestinians and the Arab population of occupied Syrian Golan.

10. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) said that the ESCWA report reflected the worsening economic and social situation of the Palestinian people and the serious detrimental effects of Israeli occupation on all aspects of their living conditions. The illegal Israeli policies and practices of confiscating Palestinian land and building and expanding illegal settlements and bypass roads were compounded by the construction of an expansionist wall on Palestinian land in spite of the international community's clear opposition and condemnation. The wall, which departed from the Armistice Line of 1949 (Green Line), cut deeply into the Palestinian territory and had involved the confiscation of thousands of dunums of Palestinian land and property, the exploitation and destruction of the means of livelihood of thousands of Palestinians and the de facto annexation of more Palestinian land, with grave consequences for the environment and the natural resources of near-by communities. The exploitation and destruction of Palestinian natural resources had been extensive and taken various forms, ranging from the devastation and razing of agricultural land to the policy of water diversion and the uprooting of thousands of productive trees, including olive trees, by the army and the illegal settlers.

11. The Israeli military campaign against the Palestinian people since September 2000, in addition to thousands of dead and injured civilians, had caused tremendous damage to infrastructure and agricultural property. Damage to the Palestinian economy and losses had been extensive enough to cause the complete collapse of the Palestinian economy. The continuing rise of poverty and unemployment could lead to a human catastrophe, if the international community did not take swift action.

12. The United Nations must continue to monitor the situation closely in an effort to put an end effectively to illegal Israeli activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem. Israel should be compelled to respect its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. The international community should pay the necessary attention to the issue and take urgent measures to halt the Israeli destruction of the Palestinian economy and the natural resources of Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan. Measures were also needed to strengthen assistance for the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions.

13. The speaker again reaffirmed the urgent need of the Palestinian people to lead a normal life, free from Israeli occupation, subjugation and destruction, with permanent sovereignty over their natural resources in their own independent state of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

14. **Mr. Al-Haddad** (Yemen) said that the suffering of the Palestinian people had reached unimaginable levels owing to the Israeli occupation. The Israeli occupation forces had disregarded the United Nations resolutions, which had affirmed time and again the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and oppressed the population of the territory, practiced arbitrary detentions, destroyed houses, confiscated land and devastated agricultural land. The Israeli occupation continued to affect the life of the Palestinians, especially women, children and young people, while the Israeli settlements impeded the economic and social development of the territory.

15. Although the United Nations had condemned the construction of illegal settlements, the Israeli Government had continued to enlarge them and to divert water resources to them. The settlements and the separation wall divided the land and the villages and fragmented Palestinian society. As a result, the situation in the territory had been deteriorating and many families lived below the poverty line, especially in Gaza.

16. As pointed out in a study by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the closures and the destruction of infrastructure and sanitation facilities had deteriorated the environment. The increase in violence was affecting the education of Palestinian

children who had stopped attending the schools destroyed or enclosed by the Israelis along the confrontation line. Furthermore, tension in the occupied Syrian Golan had increased owing to the arrival of new settlers. In that territory, families lacked employment and the environment had deteriorated because of tree felling.

17. The Palestinian people still longed for peace but the Israeli Government had disregarded the peace initiatives that had been undertaken, and had continued to implement a policy prejudicial to the stability of the region and to international peace and security.

18. **Mr. Al-Mehairbi** (United Arab Emirates) said that the serious escalation in the expansionist and destructive policy practised since September 2000 by Israel, the occupying power, to the detriment of the natural resources and the infrastructure in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan had led to serious deterioration of the economy and of the living conditions of Arabs in those areas. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Israeli forces had, in the last three years, demolished more than 2,000 houses and destroyed thousands of hectares of agricultural land, almost half a million olive and fruit trees, water wells and agricultural facilities in order to construct illegal settlements and bypasses, thereby leaving thousands of Palestinian farmers without a livelihood, displacing thousands of Arabs, and causing severe environmental deterioration. The Israeli Government's policy of closures and mobility restrictions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had cost the Palestinian economy half of its gross national income. Even after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, Israel had controlled the water resources in the occupied territory, destroyed most of its infrastructure, and confiscated and withheld Palestinian Authority revenues and financial resources since 2002, preventing the Authority from meeting its responsibilities and economic and human commitments to the Palestinian people, thereby causing their living condition to deteriorate further. The separation wall, illegally constructed by Israel in the face of international rejection, was another form of inadmissible acquisition of land by force and constituted a grave violation of the United Nations Charter and related international instruments, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention. It also isolated Palestinian cities and villages and separated Palestinian people from each other and from their work and schools.

19. The United Arab Emirates, deeply concerned about the war crimes committed by the Israeli military forces against the people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan Heights, stressed the urgency of implementing a comprehensive, just and permanent settlement to the Palestinian question, in order to end the human tragedy of the Palestinian people and the Arab population in those territories. To that end, the United Arab Emirates called on the international community to compel Israel to cease immediately its aggression in the occupied Arab territories and to implement all of the international resolutions that called for Israel's withdrawal from all Arab lands that it occupied in 1967; reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the Arabs of the occupied Syrian Golan to their natural and economic resources; and called on Israel to abstain from exploiting, causing the loss or depletion of, or endangering the natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan. They further demanded that Israel should accept the initiatives based on the principle of land for peace, such as the Arab Peace initiative and the road map, which provided for the establishment of the Palestinian State in 2005. They also asked Israel to comply with all of its agreements with the Palestinian Authority, and to cease and reverse the construction of the separation wall, as required in the last resolution of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly.

20. **Mr. Hashem** (Bahrain) said that the policy of annexation and the restrictions imposed by Israel on the freedom of movement had caused the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to deteriorate enormously. By building settlements, Israel was modifying the demographic characteristics of the Palestinian territory. By diverting the water and other resources of the territory, it was impeding its economic growth. Such practices contravened the United Nations resolutions that urged Israel to stop them. Although those resolutions condemned the illegal settlements that hindered the economic development of the Palestinian territory, Israel had constructed new settlements and had driven the Palestinians from their land, greatly increasing the number of unemployed, had caused income from agricultural products to plummet, and had deprived many inhabitants of the

Palestinian territory and of the occupied Syrian Golan of health security and social benefits.

21. Israel had occupied lands that were under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Territory and had continued to destroy houses, impose closures and restrictions that impeded the movement of the Palestinian population and of Arabs in the occupied territories and build the separation wall that divided lands, cities and villages, prevented access to water resources and destroyed arable land. It was therefore necessary to promote a just and comprehensive peace, as envisaged in the initiative approved at the Arab Summit of Beirut, based on the resolutions of the Security Council and on the principle of land for peace. The Palestinian people must exercise its inalienable rights, especially the right to establish an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

22. **Ms. Malik** (Pakistan) said that the illegal occupation of Palestine had not only hampered its economic growth, but had also had a deep psychological impact on the people. First, in two years there had been an upsurge in violence. The Israeli occupation forces had killed many Palestinians, perpetrated extra-judicial killings, detained thousands of persons and demolished many Palestinian homes. Those atrocities had further aggravated the economic and social conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the deterioration in the security situation had led to an increasing sense of hopelessness and frustration among the Palestinian people. Second, the continued growth of the settlements and the confiscation of Palestinian land and properties had seriously affected the lives of the Palestinian people. The settlements had restricted the growth of Palestinian communities and deprived the Palestinian people of valuable agricultural land – a resource essential to their survival. Third, the settlements and other measures imposed on the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to pose serious threats to the environment and to water and other natural resources. Moreover, closures and restrictions on movement had completely cut off the Palestinians from any water source, while the dumping of waste water and industrial pollutants in Palestinian areas contaminated the water resources and the environment. Fourth, the impact of the occupation and the increased violence on Palestinian health and education had been devastating, especially with regard to children. Lastly, poverty had risen substantially on account of the lack of economic activity owing to the deterioration in the living conditions of the Palestinian people.

23. The population in the occupied Syrian Golan was facing similar conditions. Increasing unemployment and a declining economy were causing the living conditions of the Arab population in the Syrian Golan to deteriorate. The growing number of settlements and the unequal distribution of resources had aggravated the economic and social situation in the area, while the closures and restrictions on movement imposed by Israel had further limited access to economic opportunities.

24. Consequently, the international community must take urgent measures to put an end to the violence and facilitate the resumption of the peace process in order to establish peace in the region. Pakistan, which had steadfastly and unequivocally supported the just struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights, believed that there coul ' be no lasting peace in the Middle East if those legitimate rights were not ensured. It hoped that the Quartet's road map would be faithfully implemented and that the two sides would resume dialogue. The dialogue should also include the restitution of the Syrian Golan. Lastly, Pakistan reiterated that there could be no lasting security without lasting peace, and that lasting peace could only be ensured by adhering to the principles of justice and international law.

Agenda item 99: Training and research (*continued*)

(a) United Nations Institute for Training and Research

Draft resolution on the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (A/C.2/58/L.28)

25. **Mr. Benmellouk** (Morocco), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.28, reaffirming the usefulness of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), in view of the importance of professional training in the United Nations system and the needs of the Member States in that area.

26. *Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh) took the Chair.*

Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/58/3 (Supplement No. 3), A/58/84, A/58/96, A/58/151, A/58/152, A/58/193, A/58/204, A/58/383, A/58/413, A/C.2/58/2)

Draft resolution on the Agreement between the United Nations and the World Tourism Organization (A/C.2/58/L.29), submitted by the Chairman of the Second Committee on the basis of informal consultations

27. **Mr. Benmellouk** (Morocco), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, supported the draft resolution and welcomed the World Tourism Organization (WTO) to the United Nations system, stressing the role of tourism in development and in the economic growth of all countries and its key importance to the Group of 77 and China. He expressed the hope that such a step, in addition to strengthening the links and cooperation between the organization and the United Nations system and its funds and programmes, would help to stimulate and support development in the developing countries.

28. **The Chairman** submitted draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.29 to the Committee for adoption .

29. *Draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.29 was adopted.*

30. **Mr. Frangialli**, Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization, speaking on behalf of the 143 Member States of the organization, expressed thanks for the approval of the draft agreement, under which the World Tourism Organization (WTO) would become a specialized agency of the United Nations system. He recalled the history of the organization since its founding in 1934 as the International Union of Official Tourist Propaganda Organizations, including the establishment in 1947 of the International Union of Official Travel Organizations (IUOTO), which, at the request of the General Assembly, had been renamed and had become an intergovernmental institution in 1970 with headquarters in Madrid, not to mention other milestones, such as the proclamation of 1967 "International Year of Tourism".

31. Under the influence of the information and communications technologies, tourism had developed, with the emergence of new types of operators, and spread all over the world, with, for instance in 2002, 703 million arrivals and expenditure amounting to US$ 474 billion, overcoming difficulties such as wars, terrorism, natural disasters and epidemics. Over the years, WTO had reflected and moved with these developments, while its cooperation with the United Nations had grown ever closer, highlighted by events such as WTO's joining the United Nations Staff Joint Pension Fund in 1996, the adoption by the General Assembly of WTO's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, the proclamation of 2002 "International Year of Ecotourism", and the inclusion of tourism in the Brussels Programme of Action and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

32. WTO expressed satisfaction with the content of the agreement in its current form and solemnly undertook to do its utmost to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Thanks to WTO's solvency and financial independence, the agreement would have no material implications for the United Nations. On the other hand, the agreement would raise WTO's profile and ensure the tourism sector would be acknowledged on an equal footing with such other activities of human society as industry, agriculture, transport, education, culture, health and labour.

33. **The Chairman** congratulated the World Tourism Organization (WTO) on behalf of the Committee on the Agreement and affirmed that the organization could be an effective instrument for bringing cultures close together, stimulating the economy of developing countries and cooperating with all United Nations bodies with a view to attaining the MDGs.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.